1: Junod M-5 (1895-1909)1927 Thonga

PRELIMINARY CHAPTER

THE THONGA TRIBE

1. *Geographical delimitation of the tribe.*

101 The Thonga tribe is composed of a group of Bantu peoples
131 settled on the eastern coast of South Africa, extending from the neighbourhood of St Lucia Bay (28° Lat. S.) on the Natal Coast up to the Sabie River on the north (1). Thongas are to be found therefore in four of the present South African states : in Natal (Amatongaland), the Transvaal (Leydenbourg, Zoutpansberg and Waterberg districts), in Rhodesia, and chiefly in Portuguese East Africa (Lourenço Marques, Inhambane and Mozambique Company districts). The Thongas border on the Zulus and the Swazis southwards ; westwards on the Ba-Mbayi, Ba-Lauti and other Suto-Pedi clans in the Transvaal ; northwards on the Vendas and Ba-Nyai in the Zoutpansberg and Rhodesia, and on the Ndjaos near the Sabie ; and eastwards on the Thongas near Inhambane and on the Ba-Chopi, north of the mouth of the Limp[illegible]

101 Th[illegible]ribe comprises a certain number of clans. These clans form six groups, which speak the various dialects of the Thonga language.

133 (1) There are two rivers called Sabie in the Thonga Territory ; one is the Sabie of the South, which flows in the Leydenburg district and joins the Nkomati not far from Km. 53 of the Lourenço Marques-Transvaal line, and the other, that here referred to, which comes from Rhodesia and flows into the Indian Ocean not far from the 21° lat. South.

101 619 insult. It is applied in Johannesburg roughly to all the East Coast "boys," even to the Ba-Chopi, who are considered by the Ba-Ronga of Delagoa Bay as much inferior to them. Its adoption would be objectionable on that account. I recognise that the word Ba-Thonga does not enjoy much more favour and is not quite satisfactory; however considering that it means originally "people of the East" and that the tribe is indeed living in the eastern part of South Africa, it ought to be accepted in the course of time without much difficulty.

Let us remark that another tribe, quite different in language and ethnographic features, dwelling near Inhambane, quite close to our Thonga tribe, calls itself Ba-Tonga. But there is no aspirate after the *T* and this is enough to distinguish it from the Ba-Thonga.

IV. *The six Groups of the Thonga Clans.*

101 197 131

Let us consider briefly, with the aid of the accompanying map, these six main groups.

1. All round the Bay of Delagoa, we find the *Ronga group*. This word Ronga is a very old one and very convenient, as all these clans consent to be called by it. The real Rongas are, I think, the Mpfumo and the Matjolo clans, who are settled on the west of the Bay. South of the Bay is the Tembe clan and its two sub-clans, which have become independent: Matutwen and Maputju. North of Lourenço Marques are the Mabota and Maz..aya clans, the country of the latter, which extends on both sides of the estuary of the Nkomati, being called Nondwane. Further north are the two clans of Shirindja and Manyisa which form the transition to the following group. The new generation speaks a purer Ronga dialect, the old one more the Djonga.

Continuing our survey in a northerly direction, we cross two rivers: the Nkomati and the Olifant. From the Nkomati to the Olifant we meet with the Djonga group, and from the Olifant northward with the Nwalungu group. Djonga means

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101 South, Nwalungu means North. The Ba-Djonga are the clans
197 south of the Olifant, the Ba-Nwalungu north of it. Such
131 designations have therefore only a relative value and have been evidently invented by people dwelling on the borders of the Olifant. But they are used in some places, and I do not find any better ones to designate the two dialects of the Thonga spoken south and north of the river.

2. *The Djonga group* includes the Khosa (in the Khosen or Cossine country) the Rikotjo, the Shiburi and the Mathiye clans, if we go directly north. To the east of the Djonga clans proper, we find a number of clans settled on both sides of the Limpopo, in the triangle formed by the Limpopo, the Shengan and the line of the 24° parallel and calling themselves the Ba-Hlabi. They speak a dialect very similar to the Djongas. Their names are as follows, from the confluence of the Olifant and the Limpopo to the south: Mapsanganyi, Tsungu, Mavundja, Nkwinika and Makamo. The Nkuna clan was settled not far from this confluence. It migrated into the Transvaal in great numbers, together with Mavundja and other Hlabis during the wars of Manukosi.

3. *The Nwalungu group* includes two different elements: first the Ba-Loyi or Ba-ka-Baloyi, in the triangle formed by the two rivers northward of their confluence, and the Maluleke further north, extending all along the Limpopo as far as its confluence with the Lebvubye River and further along the Lebvubye itself. They occupy there a part of the Low Country of the Transvaal, being more or less mixed with the Venda and Nyai population. The Malulekes, according to the Native historians, are one half of a larger clan called the Nwanatis, whose second half is settled near the mouth of the Limpopo under the name of the Makwakwas of Khambane and Ndindane.

These three groups are to be found on the central line, on the axis of the tribe. On the west we meet with the Hlanganu group and on the east with the Bila and Hlengwe groups.

4. *The Hlanganu group* is the smallest of all, including the Nwamba clan in the plain of Delagoa Bay, and the Mabila and Hlanganu clans in the Lebombo hills. The Hlanganus overflow

101 into the Transvaal territory and are scattered in the large desert
197 of the Low Country of the Leydenburg district, together with
131 clans of Sutho (Pedi) and Swazi (Mbayi) origin. The Hlanganu dialect is very much akin to the Djonga.

5. *The Bila group*, called after the name of Bila, the great and fruitful plain of the Lower Limpopo valley, includes the clans living on both banks of the river. They have suffered very much at the hands of the Zulu invaders who made their home in that fertile country, but their dialect has kept some very peculiar traits.

101 6. *The Hlengwe group*. In the Djonga dialect, *hlengwe* means
131 wealth. I do not know if this be the etymology of the name Hlengwe as designating all the Thonga population of the east and north-east, from the Limpopo to Inhambane and to the Sabie of the north. The name Hlengwe applies properly only to the northern part of the eastern clans. I retain it however provisionally. It seems that this group, which forms perhaps half of the tribe, includes at least three great subdivisions : 1) The *Hlengwes proper*, facing the Malulekes and the Ba-Loyi on the west and extending as far as the Sabie to the north. Their main clans are Tshauke, Mbenzane, Mavube, Magwinyane. 2) *The Ba-Tswa* (1) of Inhambane with the Hlenbengwanes, Yingwanes, Nkumbis. 3) *The Nwanatis* with the Makwakwas, Khambanes, Ndindanes, bordering on the Chopis to the north and the west.

101 Outside of the proper area of the tribe, we find *colonies of*
167 *emigrated* Thongas in many parts of the Transvaal. The largest is in the Spelonken district, north of the Zoutpansberg, where they form the majority of the population. There they were called

(1) This name Ba-Tswa, is the Hlengwe form of Ba-Tjwa, a term by which the Zulus have been commonly designated amongst the Thongas. Ba-Tjwa is probably the corresponding form for Ba-Rwa, an appellation by which the Suthos of the Zoutpansberg plains used to call the tribes of the mountains, whence comes the wind called Bu-rwa. The Ba-Rwa are properly the Bushmen, as one knows, but under that name were included Bantus of a quite different type. This shows that the Natives, in naming foreign tribes, consider the geographical relation between themselves and these tribes much more than their ethnic characteristics : so one very often meets with the word "Bakalanga" which means people of the north. The Bakalanga proper are in Rhodesia, but in Lourenço Marques the Khosa tribe is called Bakalanga.

The term Ba-Ngoni is applied to the Zulus, as well as Ba-Tjwa, but it is restricted to that clan of the Zulus which was under Manukosi.

Ma-Gwamba by the Vendas and Bveshas who possessed the country before them. These Ma-Gwamba are made up mostly of Hlengwe, Maluleke and Djonga refugees. In the Modjadji country, we find two colonies of Ba-ka-Baloyi with their own chiefs. Near Leydsdorp, a more considerable clan, numbering about 6000, is the Nkuna clan under Muhlaba. On the Sabie of the south, in the plain of the Leydenburg district, another colony has been founded more recently, since the war of the Portuguese against Gungunyane, by the Ngonis and Bilas who did not accept the new rule. They remain under Mpisane, a near relative of the late Ngoni potentate.

In the Orichstadt valley, and in many other parts of the Leydenburg mountains, little colonies of Thongas are met with, as well as in the Waterberg district (especially near Nilstrom) and in the towns of Pretoria and Johannesburg. A good many of the thousands of Shangaanes coming every year to the mines settle down definitively in the Town Locations of these great centres.

During the last twenty years the number of these emigrants has certainly increased. It was not possible to indicate on the map all their settlements between the Hlanganu domain proper, the Drakensberg Mountains and the Olifant River. On the farms of the Zoutpansberg and Pietersburg Districts they also form a notable portion of the Native population.

V. *The numerical strength of the Thonga Tribe.*

It is very difficult to ascertain the numbers of the Thongas. The census of the Transvaal taken on the 17th of April 1904 gives 82,325 as being the total Thonga population of that colony ; of these, 48,117 are located in the Zoutpansberg. This is a minimum, as it has been recognised that at least 10 % ought to be added to these figures ; there were scarcely any young men in the kraals when the census was taken. Let us estimate at 100,000 the numerical strength of that part of the tribe which is located in the Transvaal.

As regards Portuguese East Africa, we find some interesting

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THE PLACE OF THE NORTH-EASTERN TRANSVAAL SOTHO IN THE SOUTH BANTU COMPLEX

EILEEN JENSEN KRIGE

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THE Sotho of the North-Eastern Transvaal Lowveld occupy an area with fairly well-marked geographical boundaries. To the east, the Game Reserve, low-lying, unhealthy, very sparsely populated even in the old days, remains an effective barrier to contact with and further migrations from the Shangana-Tonga of Portuguese East Africa. South are the Olifants River and the towering Drakensberg range curving north-west then northwards to merge into the well-marked escarpment on the west dividing Lowveld from Highveld. On the north the Klein Letaba river roughly demarcates our area from the Venda and the Shangana-Tonga of the Knobnose Location. The Sotho-speaking Venda of Tswale and Moila, who fall well within this area, resemble in culture their Sotho-ized neighbours more than their own Venda kin to the north; but the Shangana-Tonga, who occupy most of the lower-lying eastern and north-eastern portion of the area and comprise at least one-third of its total population, are unassimilated strangers of different stock coming from the north-east and east. They have been entering since about 1840, usually in small bands, at first seeking the protection of and subjecting themselves to the Sotho owners of the land. On the arrival

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of the white man, some of their headmen were granted independent locations which have served as nuclei for the building up of more united tribal groups. (See accompanying map.)

The most important Sotho tribes of this area are the Lobedu, the Narene and the Khaha who together comprise about three-quarters of the total Sotho population.[1] The outstanding demographical feature is, however, the numerical predominance of the Lobedu who, with a population of well over 40,000, are not only the greatest tribe, but outnumber all the other Sotho-speaking tribes put together.[2] The pre-eminence and cultural influence of the Lobedu in this area does not rest solely upon their numerical preponderance. It is based largely upon the fame of their queen, Modjadji, who, as the greatest rain-maker in the Northern Transvaal, is not only regularly approached with gifts by other chiefs but also sometimes places them on the throne (*ho bea bohosi*) and is appealed to in cases of disputed succession.

This area, though forming part of a greater cultural whole including the Northern Transvaal Highveld and probably Pediland to the south, is, however, sharply characterized by distinctive features, such as ritual suicide of the chief and recognition of women as rulers in their own right, that are not found elsewhere. These are sufficient to form a fairly well-defined culture pattern, which, owing to the overwhelming numerical preponderance of the Lobedu, if for no other reason,

[1] The Sotho population of our area is made up as follows, according to van Warmelo:

Lobedu	8237 taxpayers.		
Narene	2521	„	(Mahlo 1332, Letswalo 1189).
Khaha	1608	„	
Thabina (Mozoboya)	1088	„	
Phalaborwa	332	„	
Makxoba	700	„	
Baba Mamidja	413	„	
Shai or Tsubye	256	„	
Tswale	357	„	Sotho-speaking Venda.
Moila	260	„	

The only large tribal groups among Shangana-Tonga are

Mohlaba	2918 taxpayers.	
Nwamitwa	1347	„

[2] The proportion is Lobedu 8237 taxpayers.
rest 7533 „

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Venda FX19
Thonga FT6

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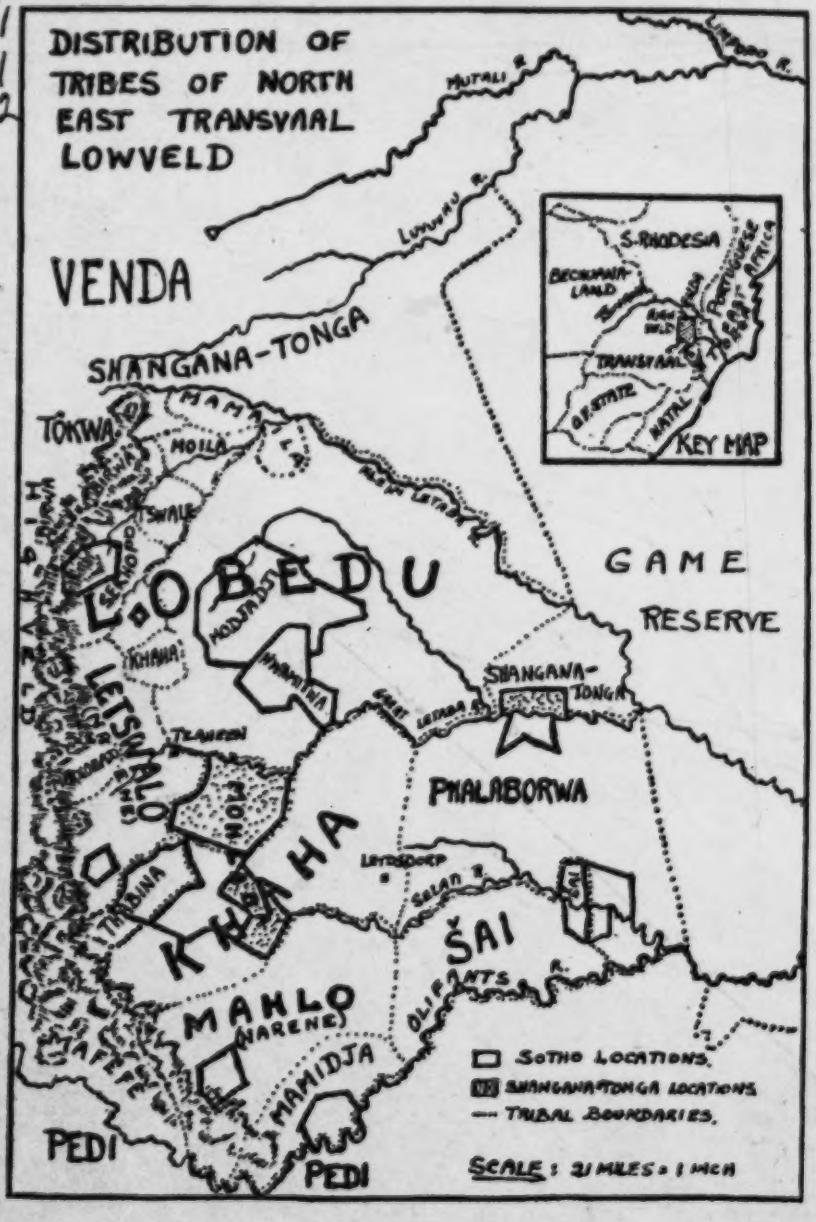

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